

## Superintendent's Corner

### The school system you do not want

BY DR. ANTHONY BENT  
SUPERINTENDENT

Over the years, I have written in this column that the community will ultimately choose the kind of school system that it wishes for its children. As Shrewsbury citizens allocate resources to the various town agencies, vote on taxation questions, and speak publicly about the schools, they determine the quality of the program and the climate that prevails in each school.

In the 2005-06 school year, the school district implemented fees for transportation, increased class size at the middle school level, reduced the number of elective offerings at the high school, and decreased the number of teaching and support positions in the district. This was all done with an increase of 145 students over the previous year.

It should also be noted that, despite the recognized quality of the program (teachers, student

**The worry of your school superintendent is that we are on the wrong track – one that will give Shrewsbury precisely the schools that it does not want.**

achievements, etc.), Shrewsbury remains on the bottom of the Assabet Collaborative districts in per pupil expenditures and \$1,300 below the state average for the same calculation. For the current fiscal year, the school department's appropriated budget increase exactly matched the increase in state aid to schools (Chapter 70).

The looming feature in all of this is the history of enrollment growth that pressures programs and budgets, and requires more revenue than would otherwise be the case. In fact, the 5% budget increase for this year was a reduction budget for the schools and several teaching and support positions were eliminated. (Along with the enrollment increases that are unique in Shrewsbury, we also

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#### Budget development

*Check out the numbers!*

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#### Oak Middle School dedication

*Town welcomes improvement*

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#### Staff recognized

*28 teachers achieve professional status*



PHOTO BY DR. ANTHONY BENT

*Slippers and uniforms are part of daily life in Japanese Schools. Students at Wakazono Junior High School in Toyota City attend an English language class.*

## Japan and community: A Reminder to us

DR. ANTHONY BENT  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

I recently had the opportunity to travel to Japan for three weeks as a participant in the Japan Fulbright Memorial Fund program funded by the government of Japan. The experience took me to Tokyo and the city of Toyota. In Tokyo, the 200 participants attended seminars on the government, education, and economy of Japan. My subgroup (20 educators) also visited an elementary school, a junior high school, and a high school. I spent a day at the Dojiyama Elementary School, the Wakazono Junior High School, and the Higashi High School- all public schools and all in Toyota City.

The schools were fascinating on many levels, and what may seemed like superficial differences between their schools and ours, were really more substantive upon my further reflection. Students at all

levels wear slippers in school. They place their street shoes in cubbies upon entering the building. I also observed high school students cleaning their school-vacuum cleaners for the inside and brooms for outdoors. The junior high school students ate lunch in the classroom, after having been served by other students who had gone to the kitchen to retrieve the meal of the day. It also happens to be practice that students stand when responding to a teacher's question. In addition, students stand at the conclusion of a class to thank the teacher for teaching the lesson.

The first minister of education in Japan, Mori Arinori, said in 1885, "In the administration of all schools, it must

be kept in mind that what is to be done is not for the sake of the pupils, but for the sake of the country." Much has changed in education in Japan since that time, and the influence of western culture there is

**'In the administration of all schools, it must be kept in mind that what is to be done is not for the sake of the pupils, but for the sake of the country.'**

Mori Arinori, first minister of education (1885)

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